



People Concerned About Chemical Safety

Dedicated to the protection of health and safety of all who reside, work, and study in the vicinity of local chemical plants producing highly toxic chemicals.



ChemSafety.org



(304) 546-7764



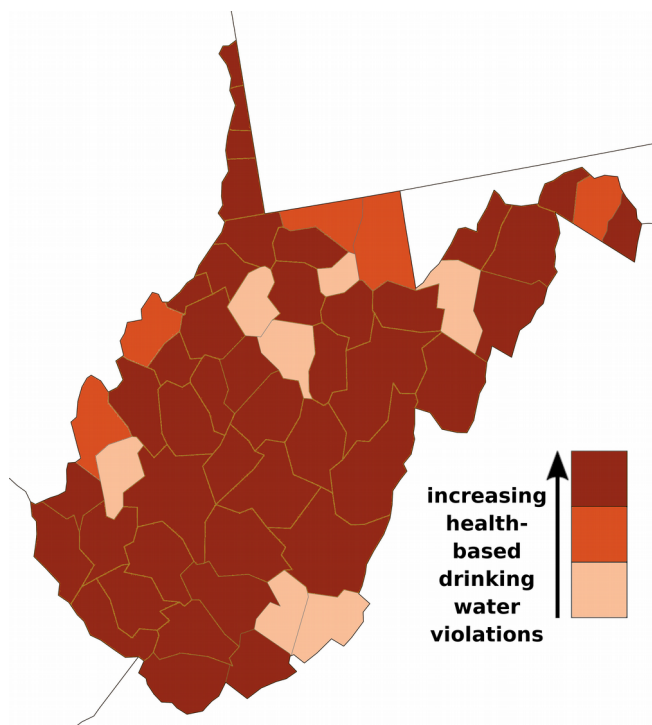
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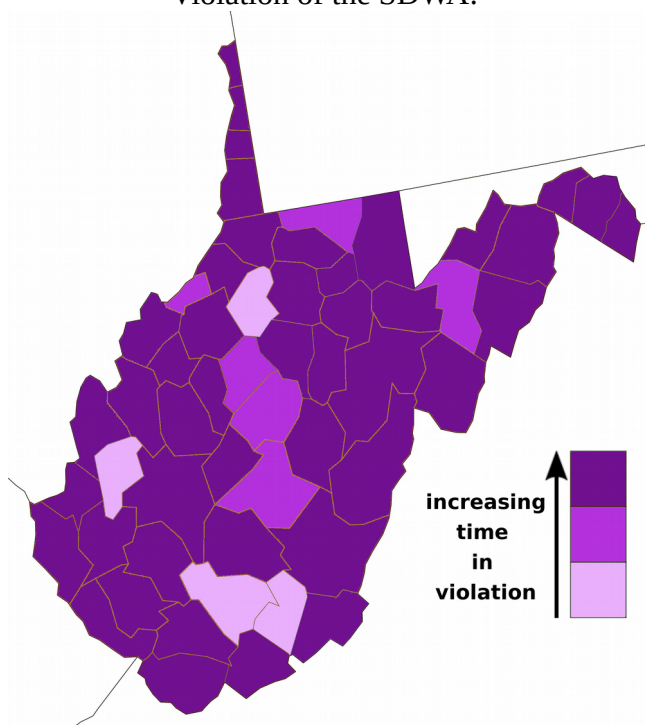
Violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in West Virginia Counties Compared to National Averages

Health-based SDWA Violations by County:



Of 55 Counties in West Virginia, 36 (65%) ranked among the worst third of US counties for the most health-based violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act, and only seven are among the third of US counties which had the fewest health violations.

Length of Time WV Counties Remained in Violation of the SDWA:



42 of West Virginia's 55 Counties (76%) are among the worst third of US counties for longest time out-of-compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act, and only four are in the third of US Counties with the shortest time out-of-compliance.

In a new report, *Watered Down Justice*, People Concerned About Chemical Safety, the Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform (EJHA), and Coming Clean analyzed violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The analysis relied on data from June 1, 2016 to May 31, 2019 and included nearly 200,000 SDWA violations. (Read the report at nrdc.org/resources/watered-down-justice).

West Virginia Needs Stronger Drinking Water Standards to Protect Our Health

“Hazardous substance spills pose a significant public health threat, particularly to those who live in low-income communities and communities of color. West Virginia residents know exactly what it’s like to lose our drinking water to a chemical spill and to have state authorities and federal regulators fail to hold polluting industries accountable and prevent contamination. We need action at all levels to protect our drinking water.”

— Pam Nixon, People Concerned About Chemical Safety

West Virginia drinking water systems were cited for numerous health-based violations of the SDWA during the study period, and most municipal drinking water systems in West Virginia were in violation of the law at some point during this period. Health threats associated with these violations can include cancer, impaired brain development, decreased kidney function, and potentially life-threatening gastrointestinal disease.

West Virginia residents face a wide variety of chemical threats to their drinking water, health, and daily safety. The Kanawha Valley area alone hosts 13 high-risk chemical facilities included in the US Environmental Protection Agency Risk Management Plan program, which covers industrial and commercial facilities that use or store extremely hazardous chemicals, creating constant risk of a catastrophic chemical release or explosion. These hazards combine with other pollution and toxic sites to amplify the harm inflicted on communities, and these cumulative impacts place additional weight on already overburdened communities. A Coming Clean report, *Life at the Fenceline*, found that people in the Kanawha Valley area face the highest cancer risk from toxic air pollutants of all nine areas studied in the report.

Small Drinking Water Systems in West Virginia Face Additional Challenges

Many small water systems do not have the capacity to maintain and improve their physical infrastructure, identify and address threats to drinking water (which facilities, industries, or factors outside their control often cause), or comply with current standards, as the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has noted. Paden City, WV is an example of a water system facing difficulty with legacy pollution from the industrial contaminant, tetrachloroethylene, which is linked to cancers and liver damage. In addition, EPA states that many small systems “are likely to serve low-income, vulnerable populations.”

The Full Scope of the Problem is Likely Greater Than We Know

The EPA regulates only a small subset of drinking water contaminants, and the agency has failed to adopt a single new standard for an unregulated contaminant since 1996. Therefore, many serious drinking water contamination threats (including polyfluoroalkyl and perfluoroalkyl substances or PFASs, which has stricken drinking water sources in Parkersburg, WV and elsewhere) are not violations of the law. Also, our analysis did not include populations served by private wells or noncommunity water systems, from which many West Virginians get their drinking water. The SDWA does not cover private wells; maintenance and testing are the responsibility of the well owner. Private wells can be contaminated by pathogens, naturally occurring elements, agricultural chemicals, and nearby industrial activities such as mining.

Common-Sense Solutions Exist — Urge Your State Legislator to Protect Our Water Quality Standards and Enact stronger Drinking Water Protections by Calling (304) 347-4836.

To Report a Spill or Chemical Emergency, Call 1-800-642-3074.

Read our report, Watered Down Justice, at nrdc.org/resources/watered-down-justice.



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UNLEASHING THE POWER OF COLLABORATION FOR
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